

### **Virtual Museums and Field Trips**

Because of many constraints including budget reductions, trip insurance and transportation and demand for in-class instructional time to prepare students for mandatory standardized testing, school districts have severely cut back on providing actual hands-on field trip experiences for their students.

However, savvy teachers can use virtual museums online to provide their students with virtual fieldtrips that can enrich and complement subject matter and content.

It is important for teachers to follow a few guidelines when they are developing a virtual fieldtrip for their students. These guidelines include:

- Previewing and screening the websites before including them in the curriculum (this should be a “given” for any internet content in the classroom). Make sure that the virtual exhibitions and activities enrich and enhance the content and will add to the students’ learning.
- Making sure that the selected sites are not blocked by the school system servers and that the sites load quickly on the school computers.
- Providing an “itinerary” for students as they engage in the virtual fieldtrip. Remember that pairing students to explore sites is often more effective than having students explore individually. Students should have a specific plan that describes what they are to explore and what they should be looking for as they visit the sites. “Treasure hunts”, “scavenger hunts”, or worksheets that students fill in can provide them with guidance and serve as an assessment for the activity.
- Giving students a clear rationale or purpose so that they understand why they are engaging in the activity and how it is aligned with the curriculum objectives.
- Including an activity that requires students to demonstrate what they learned on their virtual fieldtrip - perhaps allowing students to create a technology-based project (Glogster, PowerPoint, pamphlet, etc.) - and sharing it with the rest of the students in the class.

### **Assignment -**

You will work in pairs to complete this assignment. I will try to pair up students according to their grade level/content area.

After spending some time exploring some of the virtual museum sites (URLs provided in Blackboard), think about a unit/lesson that you may teach (refer to the VSC at <http://www.mdk12.org> for ideas) for which you think a virtual tour or fieldtrip would be appropriate. Find some sites (at least 3) that you would include in your virtual fieldtrip then follow the directions below to complete the assignment:

1. Explore your sites to find out what resources and activities are there.

2. Think about how you would integrate these sites into a unit/lesson in your content/grade level area.
3. Develop **ONE** activity in which your students would participate (scavenger hunt on the site, directed investigation of a particular part of the site, engage in an online activity at the site) and write a short explanation of how you would integrate this activity into the lesson.
4. Provide a **brief description** of how you believe integrating this virtual fieldtrip “tour” would enhance students’ understanding of the subject matter.
5. **Post** your activity ideas **AND the URLs** of the sites to the appropriate page in the wiki. Be prepared to briefly share the information if called upon in class.